

Abstract of the Disclosure

A latch assembly having at least one control element having one path of motion in which a ratchet is moved to an unlatched position and another path of motion in which the ratchet is not so moved, the path of motion taken by the control element dependent upon whether an engagement element is engaged with the control element or disengaged therefrom. Preferably, the control element moves the ratchet by contact with a pawl which itself can be engaged with the ratchet. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, two or more unlatching inputs are capable of unlatching the latch assembly. However, two or more of these inputs are in series rather than in parallel so that the number of paths ending at the element or device holding the latch in its latched state is preferably fewer than the number of unlatching inputs to the latch assembly. A preferred embodiment of the present invention also employs a mechanical actuation assembly that can transmit actuation force from a control element to an engagement element in order to change the engaged state of the engagement element (and thereby to place the control element or another control element in a locked or unlocked state). The present invention also provides a fast-acting two stage actuator employing magnetic force to quickly and directly or indirectly hold an element to be controlled until an armature of the actuator can be engaged therewith.